



*A PAIR OF* **KIOWA TAB LEGGINGS**



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Upon any "dress-up" occasion for the Kiowa and Commanche men in the first few decades of the reservation period in Oklahoma, the attire was buckskin shirts with long clouts, braid wraps and broad cloth blankets. Family gatherings, parades, dances, visits and Native church meetings constituted such occasions. For some, this was daily wear.

The most prominent style of skin legging was the tab leggings which featured long rolled fringe and a pair of upper extension that were simply decorated. The decoration was most often a white peyote bead edging finished with a gourd stitched (peyote beaded) tassel.

With the number of leggings being produced by several artisans, the construction details varied greatly though the general appearance was the same. A common fit and a common method of wearing these leggings lead to this similar appearance. Most leggings were tailored for a snug fit. When worn, the top loops of each legging were strung or tied to the clout belt or sash. The bottom was fitted with a stirrup that ran across the

arch of the foot and the legging ends were tucked in the moccasins, see Figure 1. The stirrup had a practical use in that kept the legging from "hiking up" the leg when mounting a horse or walking up stairs.

Fortunately leggings of this type are not a thing of the past to be kept in trunks, closets and museum drawers. Many dancers at gourd dances and war dances are donning the traditional leather both of old and recent manufacture. Such a resurgence to the traditional clothes is applauded by many. At the annual Kiowa Gourd Dance at Carnegie in 1981, I was told by more than one clan member not to miss the Saturday dance as there would be a lot more dancers, many in skin clothing.

Since those that wish to reproduce a traditional pair of front tab leggings may not have an old pair in grandfather's trunk to go by, the details of one handsome pair of this legging type are presented here. These leggings pictured in Figure 1 are from the Thomas Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Labeled

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Figure 2 above is courtesy of Joe Swalwell of FRONTIER ORIGINALS. Pictured are Chief Quanah Parker (left) and "two medicine men".

as "Kiowa Tab Leggings: Boy's", a note was added to the effect that the cross in the beadwork indicated they were to be worn at peyote meetings, meetings of the Native American Church.

The dimensions for the leggings which are given in Figure 2 indicate that this "boy" was a young man about 5'6". It appears that a goodly portion of one buckskin hide was used for each legging as the top ties extended into the leg portion of the hide. These leggings were dyed or colored yellow typical of the Southern Plains.

Once the leggings were cut out, they were folded in half and sewn together by machine, see Figure 3. Rolled fringe was then added to the edges of the seam up to the tab extension. As Figure 4 indicates, rolled fringe was added to both edges of the seam. This treatment required twice the amount of fringe compared to many pairs examined by the author which incorporate a single set of fringes to seam up the front of the legging. Each fringe was  $\frac{3}{16}$  of an inch from the next and all in all there were about 360 fringes.

Now, 360 rolled fringes is quite a number of fringes. It undoubtedly took much time to roll and it required another hide or so. However, the effort was worthwhile as the renown of the leggings must have been based on the abundance and quality of fringe. Quality fringe is always uniform in thickness and tightly rolled. Under this criterion these leggings match up with the best.

The end of each fringe was finished in a slip knot, see Figure 5. One might think that "good quality" fringe will not untwist so why the slip knot. Since some of the fringe ends are stepped on and dragged on the ground, and since they are not attached to something solid like the butt of a fan handle, many of the lower fringes will unroll with use. Therefore, if some fringes need special treatment, treat them all the same. Figure 6 shows another common way to keep fringe from unrolling and Figure 7 shows the finished ends for the rolled fringe of the peyote beaded tassels on this pair of leggings. Regular cotton thread holds these ends together as several knots would be too large of a scale for the tassel diameter. The longest fringe was 8" and shortest 7". One inch at base was not fringed so they could be tucked in moccasins.

With the fringes in place, the remaining task is to decorate the tabs. As a rule the inside of the tabs were lined with cloth or at best dyed another color. These tabs were lined with red cotton, possibly a curtain cloth. The lining was held in place with the single bead pekoe edging, see Figure 11.

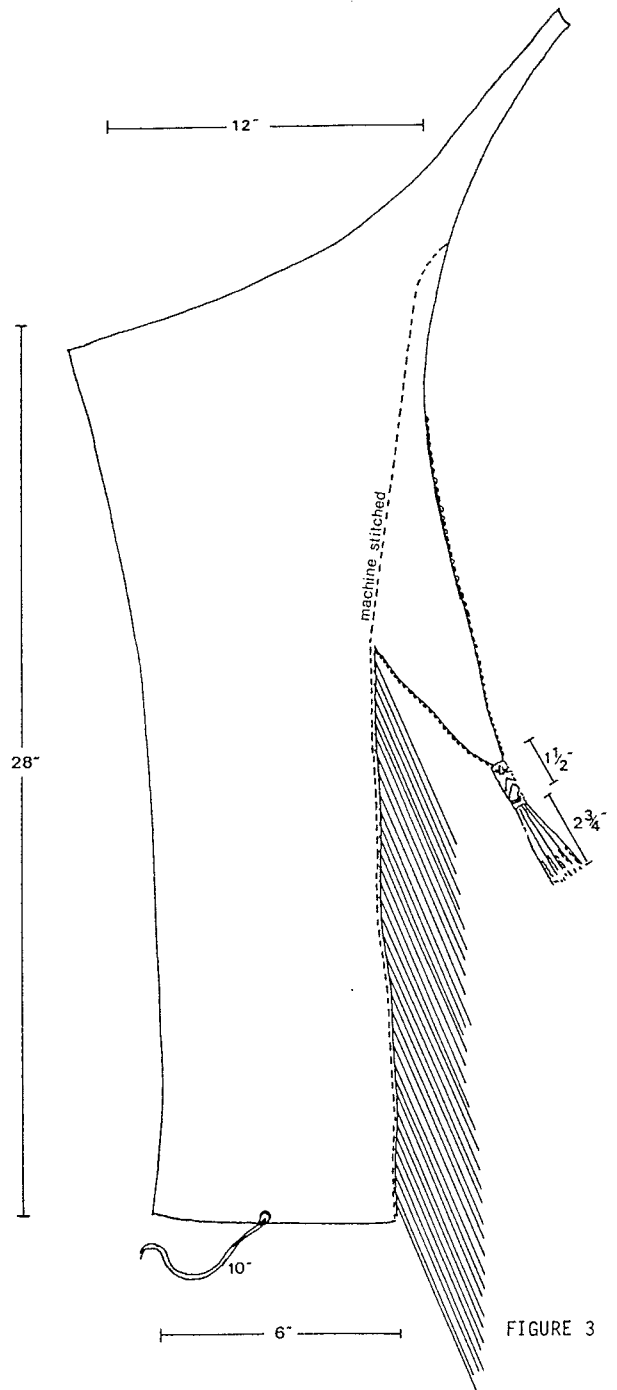


FIGURE 3

FIGURE 5

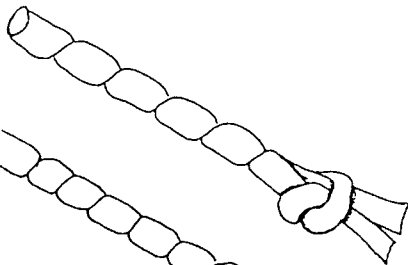


FIGURE 6

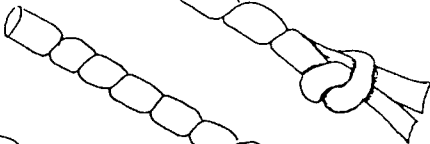


FIGURE 7

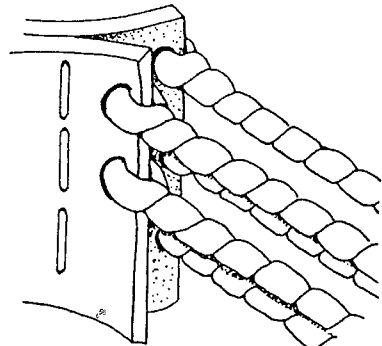
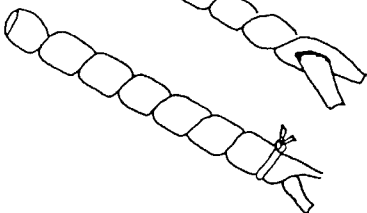


FIGURE 4

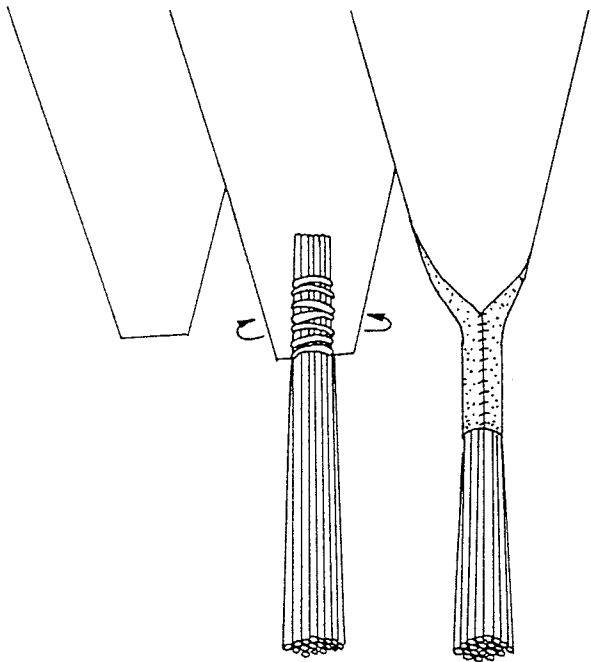
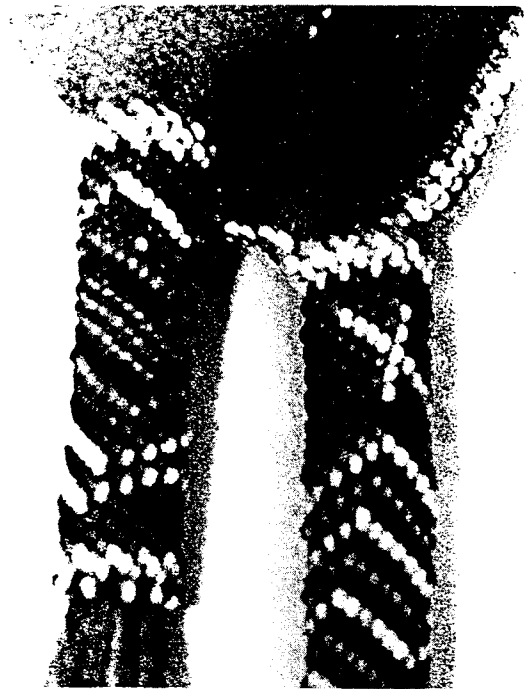


FIGURE 8

FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10

The illustrations in Figures 8-10 suggest a way in which the peyote beaded tassels were added for this legging sample. The only way to really know is to take apart a tassel and that was out of the question. Tassels were attached in several different ways. Some tassels were made apart from the legging and just sewn on. The beadwork on the tassels is the 3-bead drop gourd stitch with pony trader blue as a background



color see figure 11. Edge beading and lining was probably added after tassels were in place.

Though many of the important facts of a comprehensive nature concerning the use and variety of these leggings are lost when concentrating on a single pair of leggings, but the details considered here will serve to help in construction and aid as a specific reference.



# KIOWA TAB LEGGINGS

*A SECOND PAIR*

To dispel the notion of all tab leggings being cut and manufactured in the same way, a second pair of Kiowa leggings are presented with construction details and dimensions. This pair of leggings, also among those collected by the Gilcrease Museum of Tulsa, Oklahoma, contrasts with the pair of Kiowa front tab leggings presented in the February '83 issue in its fringe treatment, cut and tab decorations; however, the general appearance of a snug fitting legging with a decorated pair of front tassels remains.

The dimensions of this pair of leggings pictured in Figure 1 are sketched out in Figure 2. The length dimension of 32" is virtually an inseam dimension which indicates the leggings were designed for a person about 5'10" in height though the file description for these leggings read "boys".

Again there was evidence to indicate the leggings were colored with yellow "paint" but much of it had worn off in time and with use. A six inch stirrup buckskin strap was sewn to the bottom of each legging to hold the legging in place about the ankle. A 24" buckskin tie fixed to each side of the legging at the top, provided the loops through which the clout belt would pass thus holding the leggings up. Thin buckskin thongs laced these ties in place.

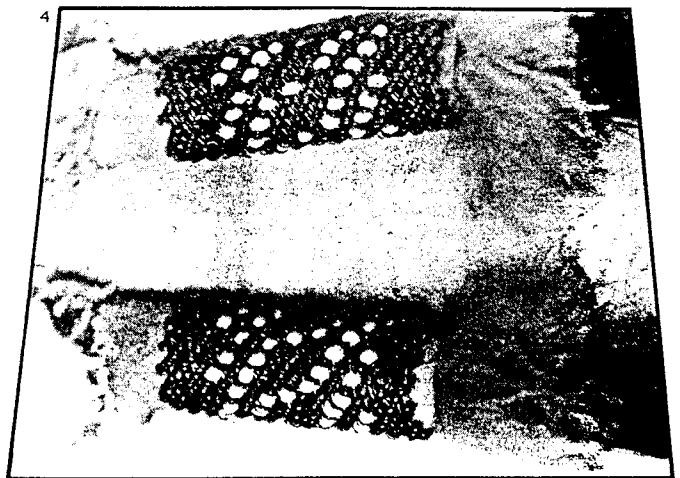
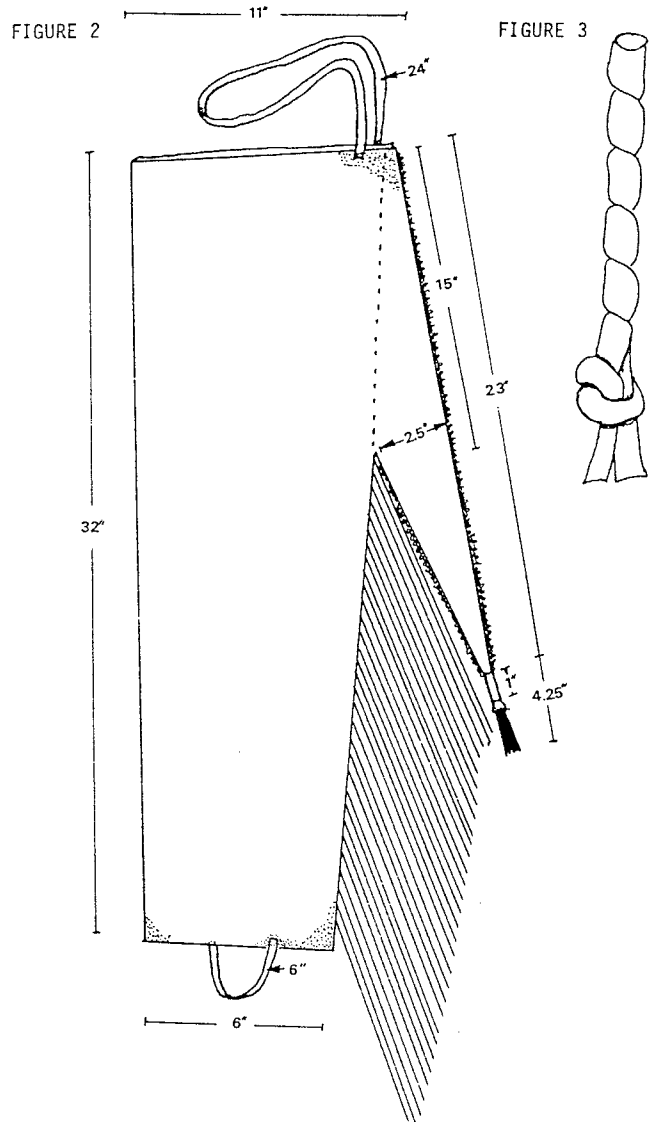
Finely rolled buckskin fringe attached to the front of the legging acts to seam the legging together. The fringes which start out 1" from the bottom of the legging are placed 1/8" apart and span the distance to a point where the tab extensions juts out. The longest fringe at the top is 13" while the shortest is 7". The majority of the fringes are finished in a slip knot, see Figure 3, while some were tied off with thread. The upper portion of the legging from the fringe to the top was seamed with a running blind stitch.

A bright, very bright, deep pink and plushy velvet lined the tabs. Affixing this lining was a simple matter of cutting the velvet to the approximate shape of each tab then tucking the edges of the velvet under as it was edge beaded to the buckskin with a 3-bead edging. The entire tab was edged with white beads in this manner until a point about 8" from the top where the pair of tabs were seamed together with one 3-bead edging continued from the other tab. The point of the tab was slightly rounded rather than to come to a distinct point, see Figure 4.

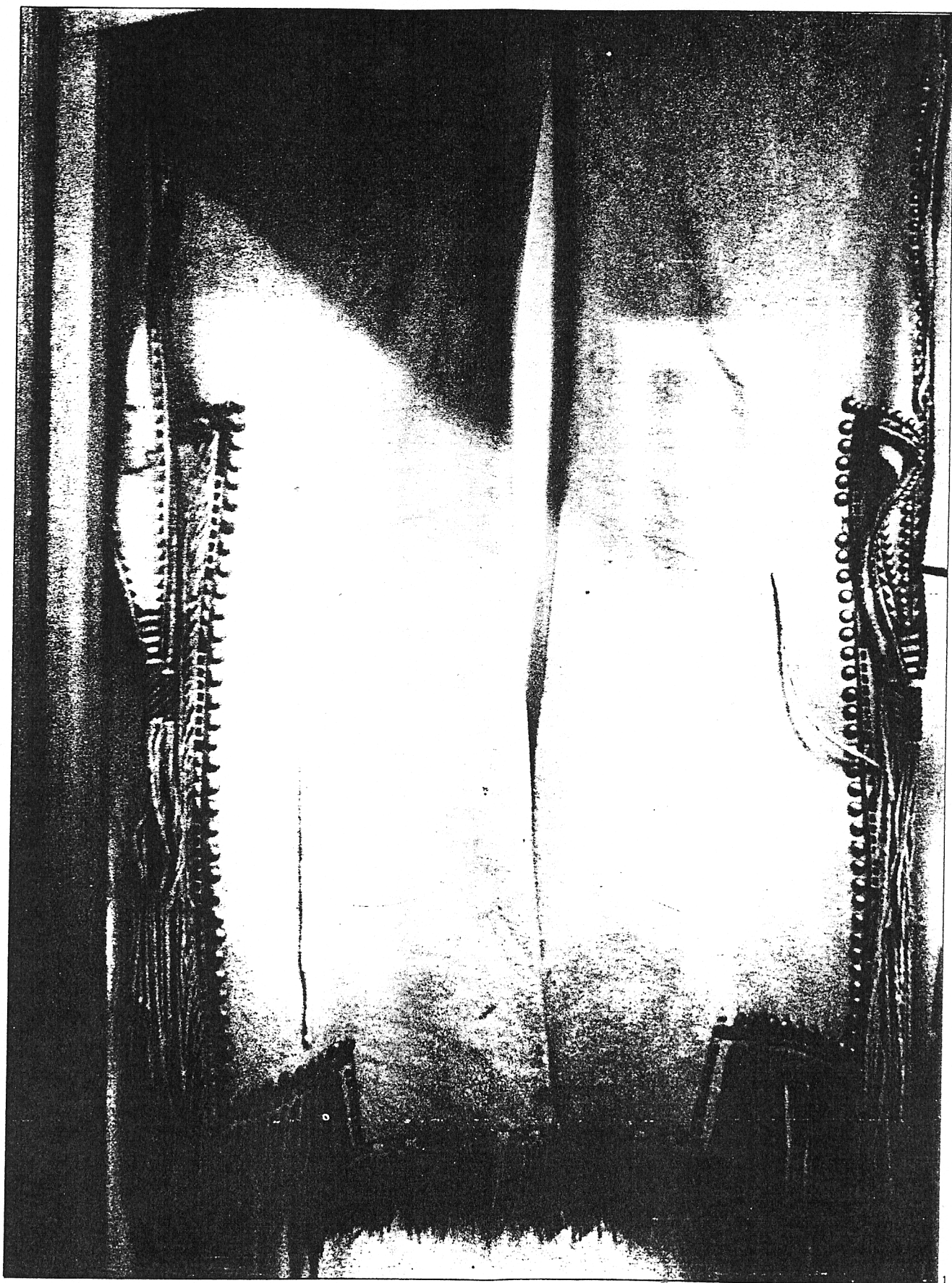
Black horsehair tassels decorated with pink fluffs and peyote beadwork completed the trim for the leggings. These four tassels were made separately and then sewn to the velvet side of each tab. The author's supposition as to the construction sequence for a tassel is as follows:

1. Horsehair cut to approximate length of 4"
2. Top inch is wrapped tightly with heavy thread
3. Pink fluffs trimmed then glued and wrapped in place
4. Buckskin cut and fitted around horsehair, 1/2" extra buckskin at top
5. Sew buckskin to horsehair even 1/2" extra
6. Add peyote beadwork
7. Trim off bottom of horsehair

The very simple design of the peyote beadwork section is done in 13/0 transparent seed beads. There are five bands of alternating blue and red beads and white beads worked into the red sections. This created a complimentary hue to match with the velvet and pink fluffs.



Other tab leggings of this type are just as handsome and just as unique in comparison to the two presented in these two articles. It is hoped that other tab leggings will be presented in the future to expand our knowledge and appreciation.



***KIOWA TAB LEGGINGS: A MOST***